

Edman -

July 9, 1953

Dear Jack:

I was amused that you had not irrevocably turned your back on the academic world, but not astonished in spite of your earlier convincing arguments. Godspeed to you.

As you have probably gathered, my correspondence is erratic. As a rule, I will either answer a letter within twenty-four hours, or not for months, so it is a matter of the immediate distractions. I am sorry that I don't know a thing about the etiology of colitis, except that it is quite obscure. This disease did pretty well wreck my father, and I am not sure it has thoroughly dissipated. It happens that the bacteria most people used in genetic research, *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella* spp. are gut inhabitants, and I am mainly impressed by how little we know of their ecology, and of their role in chronic disease. I don't doubt the psychosomatic component, but doubt it could be the whole story. It might very well interact with some specific bacteria [though this is not widely accepted] as your friend Sutton's quotation suggests, but the specific version sounds too simple. However, I don't have the clinical training to review Borgen's work with any competence, and at the moment do not have the time to go into it adequately. The Szondi test is equally unfamiliar to me. The premises sound ridiculous, but this does not mean that his conclusions are unsupportable. It sounds like projective analysis, and I can well imagine that for certain purposes human faces may evoke as revealing responses as the inkspots. But the psychometrists have to do this work; I couldn't evaluate it, though I'm interested to hear about it.

The problem is how to interpret the successes of the test. To ~~mind~~, human character is so polyvalent that you might find "delusions of grandeur" or "gullibility" or "throes of artistic composition" almost wherever you looked for it; this is of course the machinery of the Character Analysts and the Astrologists. The fortune-telling cards randomly ejected by the penny arcade machines might be equally as successful. It should be possible to run controlled experiments, in which it could be shown whether a purely random characterization of one group of tested individuals were demonstrably less reliable than the results of the test.

We had planned earlier to spend the summer in Wisconsin. (The weather is very pleasant now, but it can be fierce!) However, a rather pleasant windfall came up [which I will tell you about later, if you don't otherwise hear of it] and we will be leaving in ~~4/10/11~~ two weeks or so to drive to San Francisco, so we'll have a little time for some loafing in California. We were at UC Berkeley three summers ago and had a wonderful time. We're due back about September 1, and will be moving to a small rented house at the edge of town (i.e. about 1.5 miles from the ~~new~~ center), so perhaps you'd better write care of Genetics Department.

We acquired a tape-recorder a little while ago (runs around \$100, so it's not the cheapest, or the dearest, of toys) and find it fairly amusing, as well as useful for seminar and teaching purposes. I'm surprised more use isn't made of such gadgets in higher education—perhaps some people are afraid of over-mechanization and then of technological unemployment.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

P.S. Don't forget to send us your Syracuse address, or will the English Department do?

P.P.S. — I've been reading Chamber's "Witness" — what do you make of that as a psychoanalytic specimen?